

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 626

By Halford

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Colonel James C.
Harding, United States Air Force (retired).

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, while the heroic deeds of Tennesseans have been extolled throughout the history of our State and nation, the distinguished military service of every proud Tennessean should be illuminated, shared, and properly honored; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Colonel James C. Harding, a gallant veteran of the United States Air Force, who now resides in Huntingdon after a highly distinguished military career; and

WHEREAS, a distinguished graduate of the Penn State University Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), Colonel James Harding enjoyed an extensive military career that saw him complete a variety of flying assignments and serve in various command positions; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Harding served as squadron commander for a 400-person unit at Lackland Air Force Base and as an A-1 combat squadron commander at Nakon Phenom, Thailand, in Southeast Asia; and

WHEREAS, a veteran of the Vietnam War, Colonel James Harding flew 596 total combat missions, 139 of which were over North Vietnam; as a command pilot, he has nearly 5,000 hours of military single-engine flying time and has attained master parachutist rating with sixty-nine total jumps; and

WHEREAS, during his service in Vietnam, Colonel Harding was shot down by a SA-7 Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) while directing a rescue mission in 1972; he was rescued by United States Army helicopters after evading North Vietnamese troops and directed the rescue of his wingman who had also been shot down; and

WHEREAS, upon retiring from active duty, he entered general aviation in Texas and later was instrumental in the organization and implementation of the Air Force Junior ROTC program in the continental United States and the Department of Defense schools overseas; he has also served as an advisor to the Royal Saudi Air Force; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, Colonel James Harding retired from the Air Force Junior ROTC and became a tree farmer in Texas; he later moved his tree farming operation to Tennessee, where he has also served as a substitute teacher in Carroll County; and

WHEREAS, a member of twenty national service organizations, Colonel Harding holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Penn State University and a master's degree from Auburn University and is a graduate of Squadron Officer School, the Air Command and Staff College, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and the Air War College; and

WHEREAS, the twenty-fifth-most decorated hero in U.S. military history, Colonel Harding was awarded a number of medals, ribbons, and commendations for his service to our country, including the Air Force Cross, the Silver Star with two Oak Leaf clusters, the Legion of Merit with one Oak Leaf cluster, the Distinguished Flying Cross with eight Oak Leaf clusters, the Bronze Star with Combat V and one Oak Leaf cluster, the Purple Heart with three Oak Leaf clusters, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal with thirty-nine Oak Leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf cluster, the Presidential Unit Citation with four Oak Leaf clusters, the USAF Outstanding Unit Award with Combat V and four Oak Leaf clusters, the Combat Readiness Medal with two Oak Leaf clusters, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with eight

Bronze Service Stars, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the Royal Thai Supreme Command Forward Badge 1st Class; and

WHEREAS, an honorary captain for the Penn State Veteran Appreciation Game, he has received the Tennessee Baptist Ambassador for Christ Eagle Award and been inducted into the Pennsylvania Veterans Hall of Valor and the Brookville Area High School Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, while no offering can properly relay our gratitude for his bravery and dedication to preserving the blessed freedom that is inseparable from our American heritage and ideals, it is most appropriate that we should honor Colonel Harding to the full extent of our ability, as he has made untold and innumerable sacrifices to preserve the liberties we enjoy today; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Colonel James C. Harding, United States Air Force (retired), for his courageous service to our nation as one of Tennessee's most heroic citizens and extend to him our best wishes for continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.